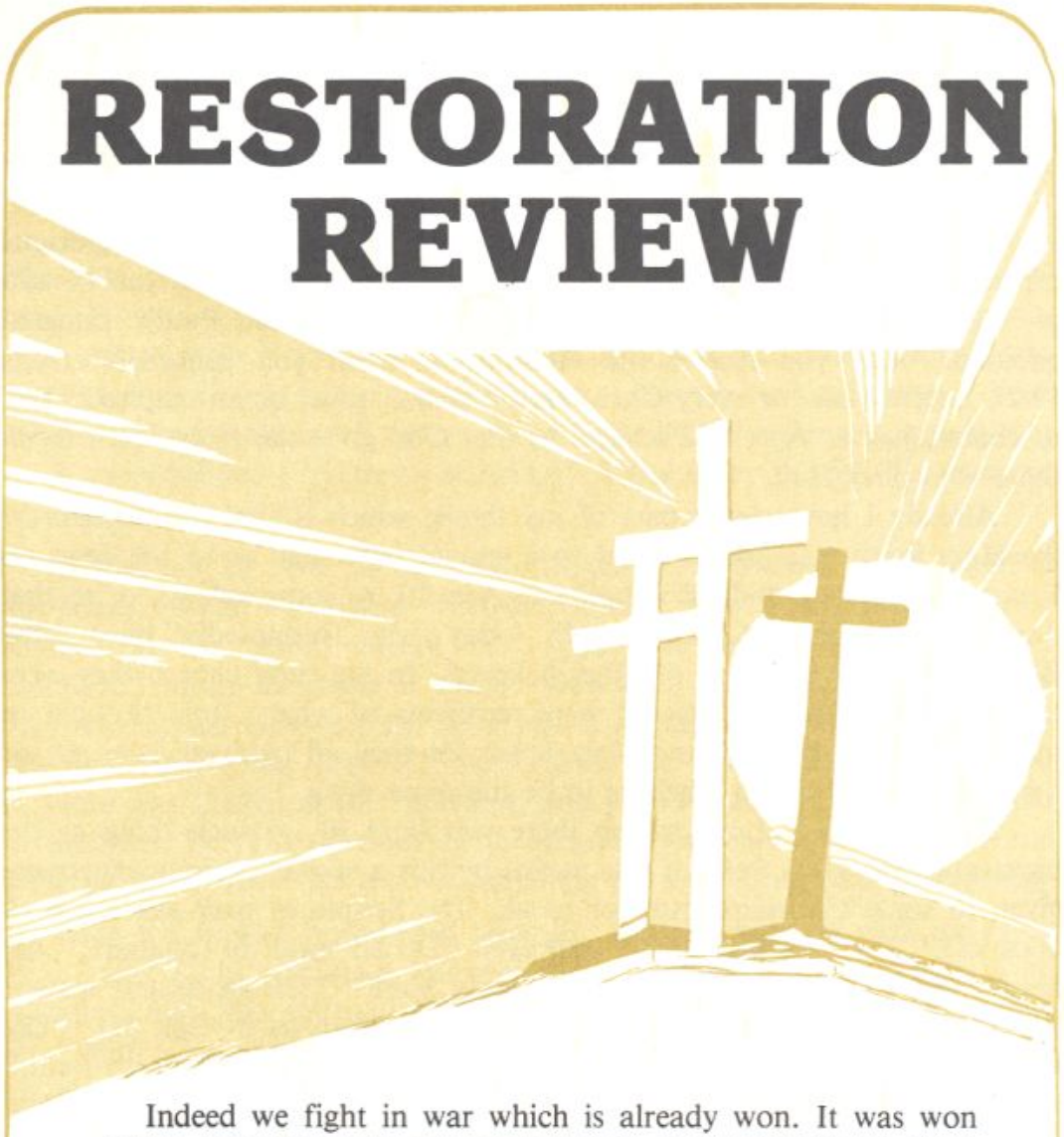
RESTORATION REVIEW



Indeed we fight in war which is already won. It was won when Jesus burst from a sealed tomb. In World War 2 when the allies invaded Europe, the whole world knew that the war was really over. Months of death and bitter fighting lay ahead. There would be cold and exhaustion, peril and pain, the crumple of bombs and the sickening death-swoops of flaming aircraft. But the end had really come. No one, except perhaps for an insane Fuhrer, was in doubt as to that fact. The curtain was falling. The grim show was finished. We are now in precisely the same position. The last invasion is on. — John White in *The Fight*

Volume 27, No. 3 Leroy Garrett, Editor March 1985

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Adventures of the Early Church …

THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT: WHAT IT MEANS

At the heart of the adventures of the early church was the glorious experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Above all else that can be said of the early Christians is that they were Spirit-filled. Paul's pungent question, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (Acts 19:2), implies that for every Christian the answer must be an emphatic *Yes, of course,* just as Acts 5:32 assures us that God gives the Holy Spirit to *all* those who obey Him.

Already I have stated part of my thesis, which is that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was not confined to a special few, such as to the Jews on Pentecost in Acts 2 and the Gentiles in Acts 10, as some believe, or to that distinct group of "Charismatics" today who supposedly have "the Baptism" to the exclusion of other believers. In the early church they were all first-class citizens in that all were recipients of what Christ brought to mankind, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, or they all received "the gift of the Holy Spirit," which I believe to be the same thing.

In other words I am saying there was (and is) no such thing as the baptism of the Holy Spirit if one means by this a special, unique experience given to some Christians but not to all. The Scriptures may ask "Are all apostles?," "Are all teachers?," and even "Do all speak in tongues?," but never "Have all been baptized of the Holy Spirit?" The Scriptures assume that all believers have received the Holy Spirit, such as in Gal. 3:2: "Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by hearing with faith," and 1 Jn. 3:24: "And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he has given us."

There is only one literal baptism, which is water baptism (Eph. 4:5). All others, a baptism of suffering or of fire or of the Spirit, are metaphorical. This is evident from the very nature of literal baptism (or immersion). Whatever is immersed (dipped) must be emersed (raised), which could not be the case with symbolic baptisms. One is not buried in a baptism of fire and then out again, and he is not immersed in the Holy Spirit and then emersed out of it. There is no element in Holy Spirit baptism, nothing literal. It is a metaphor denoting the impartation of the Holy Spirit.

There are other metaphors that denote the same experience, such as “drink of one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13); “pour out my Spirit” (Acts 2:18, Tit. 3:6), and “the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word” (Acts 10:44). No one of course literally drinks of the Spirit, and the Spirit cannot actually be poured out. Nor does the Holy Spirit fall on anyone in a literal, sense. These are ways of conveying the idea that the believer receives the Spirit and that the Spirit is with him and in him. And so he “walks” and “lives” by the Spirit, still more metaphors. Likewise, no one has ever been baptized in the Holy Spirit except metaphorically. The figure suggests that one is overwhelmed (“poured out richly,” Tit. 3:6) by the Spirit’s presence and influence in his life.

If one can be “full of new wine” (Acts 2:13) without being baptized into wine, he can be “filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18) without being baptized in the Spirit, except in a figurative sense. If “filled” and “baptized” mean the same it must follow that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was for all believers, for Acts makes it clear that they were all filled with the Spirit, as in Acts 4:31, 9:17, 13:9. The first reference reveals that the place was shaken as on Pentecost, and yet the recipients were rank and file disciples. There is no evidence in Scripture that those on Pentecost and at the house of Cornelius received anything different from other Christians.

John the Baptist introduced Jesus as “he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit” (Jn. 13:4), a distinct ministry of the coming Messiah. There is no indication that this spiritual baptism was only for a special few among those who accepted the Messiah. It is strongly implied that *all* come under the Messiah’s judgment: those who reject him to a baptism of fire and those who accept him to a baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is impressive that the Baptist, who had an exalted view of his mission to baptize, would say, “I baptize with water,” implying *only* with water, but “he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (Lk 3:16).

This shows that the reception of the Holy Spirit was the supreme blessing of the new age, one that only the Messiah could bestow. It abuses the passage to conclude that this paramount blessing was only for a select few among the Messiah’s followers. If the baptism of fire, a metaphor denoting judgment, was for all who rejected him, would not the baptism of the Holy Spirit be for all who accepted him?

This is the verdict of Scripture, such as:

Acts 2:38: “Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” The gift of the Holy Spirit, which results from believing and obeying the gospel, must be the same thing as the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 5:32: “We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.” Only God through the Messiah gives the Holy Spirit, and He gives it to all who obey Him. Is this not the spiritual baptism that the Messiah brought?

1 Cor. 3:16: “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you.” Even this church with serious deficiencies was baptized with the Holy Spirit. They did not seem to realize this, not sufficiently at least, which shows that one might have the Holy Spirit and not know it. It is a gift that must be appropriated.

2 Cor. 1:22: “He has put his seal upon us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.” It will not work to make “the given Spirit” in this verse anything different from the baptism of the Holy Spirit that Christ came to bestow. And it was clearly for all Corinthians once they believed and were baptized in water (Acts 18:8). Each one was in fact assured that his body was “a temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 6:19), which again depicts the metaphor of Spirit baptism. They were so filled and overwhelmed by God’s presence in their lives that even their bodies were likened to a glorious temple of the Holy Spirit. This is surely the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Eph. 1:13: “In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.” The “promised Holy Spirit” that they received was the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which was the promise of the Messiah’s coming. It is the Spirit that seals us or authenticates us as truly Christ’s, which is the ground of unity —“the unity of the Spirit” as Eph. 4:3 puts it.

Titus 3:4-6: “When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.” Here is proof enough the pouring out of the Spirit and the baptism of the Spirit are the same, and that the blessing is for all who obey Christ. The word for “poured out” is the same as in the quotation from Joel in Acts 2, which refers to the baptism of the Spirit on Pentecost.

The baptism (or the giving) of the Holy Spirit was sometimes accompanied by supernatural signs, as with the Ephesians in Acts 19, who "spoke with tongues and prophesied" when they received the Spirit. Usually there was no such manifestation. While tongue-speaking was sometimes a sign of the receiving of the Spirit, as in the case of Cornelius (Acts 10:46), it was not inherent in the experience, for the Spirit was usually given without any such accompaniment. Tongues were sometimes a needed sign, such as authenticating the acceptance of the Gentiles: "For they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, 'Can anyone forbid water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?'" But we cannot conclude from this that the baptism of the Holy Spirit equals speaking in tongues, for far more often the recipients did *not* speak in tongues. And so today, a believer may or may not speak in tongues, but that has no necessary relevance to whether he is Spirit-filled. The Spirit-filled life is most clearly evident in "the fruit of the Spirit," such as joy, love, and peace.

Those who would minimize water baptism have something to learn from Peter in his insistence that those Gentiles in Acts 10 who were baptized in the Holy Spirit should be baptized in water. While the receiving of the Holy Spirit was seen as essential for the Christian, indeed the most important mark, Peter's response to whether such Spirit-filled believers might skip water baptism makes that ordinance as "essential" as words could make it. Usually Spirit baptism *followed* water baptism. So the question of whether they might skip water baptism was reasonable, for they already had what really mattered, the Holy Spirit. But the apostle commands them to be baptized in water. How could the case for water baptism be stronger than that?

When Paul urged the Philippians "If there is any fellowship (koinonia) of the Spirit," he was calling for evidence of the Spirit's presence. They might have spoken in tongues and still not manifest spiritual fellowship (as in Corinth?). The point of the Spirit overwhelming us is to make us more and more like Christ. If his likeness is not in us even the tongues of angels mean nothing.

Due to such Scripture as "Be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18), which was addressed to those who had already received the Spirit, we can conclude that there should be a continual infilling and renewal of the Spirit within us. "Having begun with the Spirit" (Gal. 3:3) implies that there is to be continual growth in our walk with the Spirit.

The fallacy to avoid is to make the baptism of the Holy Spirit a kind of "second blessing" or "something more" that lies beyond what is involved in becoming a Christian. Even seasoned believers are urged to "seek the Baptism," as if they do not already have

the Spirit. Those who never have this "come along afterward" experience are often made to feel like "second class citizens," however much they reflect the likeness of Christ in their lives.

It is always in order of course to urge people to realize and actualize the blessings they already have. This is surely what often happens. Like the poor farmer who had a gold mine under his rocky soil all along but didn't realize it, some Christians discover the joy and power of the Holy Spirit that has been with them all along and suppose they have received something distinct from other Christians. This confusion is compounded when tongue-speaking is related to this. The Spirit may assign numerous gifts and ministries, including tongues, but these do not depend upon a special Spirit baptism. The believer receives the Holy Spirit when he obeys the gospel. The Spirit ministers to each believer's life according to his needs and is probably limited only by the person's willingness to be led by the Spirit.

The early Christians, being Spirit-filled, were emboldened to testify to their faith even unto death. They were empowered to deeds of heroism, acts of moral courage, and a resolute faith that defied human wisdom. Because of the Spirit within them they loved one another and shared a joyous hope. The Spirit illumined their hearts and minds to deeper insights into the will of God. Their adventure was an adventure of the Holy Spirit.

And it was the gift or the baptism of the Holy Spirit that sealed their place in the Body of Christ, as well as the basis of their unity. Paul assumed that the Ephesians in Acts 19 had been water baptized, but he wanted to make sure that they had received the Holy Spirit. He went so far as to say that if one did not have the Holy Spirit he was not a Christian (Ro. 8:9).

Would it not follow that if a church is not Spirit-filled it is not truly a Christian church? —*the Editor*

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HOW TO STAY (BLISSFULLY) MARRIED 41 YEARS

Today is Ouida's and my 41st wedding anniversary, this 18th day of February, 1985, and I have the urge to say something about it, even if it has been rather uneventful. When one moves into his fifth decade of marriage it may be in order to say something about how it happened and why it has lasted.

I spent a few hours atop our carport re-roofing, and Ouida joined me part of that time, which can be more romantic than you might think. At your next wedding anniversary you might consider a roofing job together. That of course is no chore for Ouida, who can pour concrete, lay bricks, and do plumbing. I came down long enough to order her a bouquet of spring flowers, to be delivered with my usual note: *I goofed, I am sorry, I love you.* My florist realizes by now that I have not sinned in particular, but that I am covered for the moment just in case. Besides, Ouida always laughs when she reads the note, but not as much as when I tell her that she's greater than Lincoln and much more handsome.

Ouida spent part of the day taking her mother to the doctor, and I got away long enough to join several in our church in a special prayer circle. Gn the way back I stopped at the Little-Chapel-in-the-Woods, erected back in the 1930's and dedicated by Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt and situated on the campus of Texas Woman's University, from which Ouida graduated and where I later served as a professor —and it was in that Chapel that we were married 41 years ago today.

It was a sentimental journey, and I did it alone this time, though Ouida and I often visit there. I wanted to thank God for Ouida in that Chapel and on our anniversary. I remembered how beautiful she was and how ignorant I was. Then I hurried home where we got out the old wedding pictures, which always seems like a casualty survey when one counts the deaths, the divorces, the tragedies, the heartaches of those gathered that day. I can't do that sort of thing except about every fifth anniversary. Ouida's mother was then so young and beautiful at 47, and now she is aged and senile in one of our upstairs bedrooms, locked in for her own safety, and barely a tithing of her once glorious womanhood. I don't try anymore to answer the *why's* of life. I just seek to *be* what God wants me to be.

While at the Chapel I recalled two remarkable experiences about our wedding day. I drove in from Dallas that day, where I was then a high school teacher, and parked in front of the Chapel, well in advance of my fateful hour. Minutes later Ouida's father pulled in beside me and unceremoniously began to take Ouida's trunk and suitcases out of his car and put them into mine. Watching this at a distance, I found this to be a very sobering experience. I could hear him say, "All right, you had to have her, you've got her!" At that moment I had my first and only fleeting doubt, and I wondered if I should not stop him and concede that he might be right, "Maybe we *had* better give this thing more time!" After all, Ouida was only 19, he had complained, anyone knows that is too young for a girl to get married.

The other thing was that the old preacher who performed the ceremony, a longtime friend of mine, forgot his lines and I had to prompt him. I have been married but once and I had to perform my own wedding ceremony!

So that is part of the answer on how to stay married. It must help to have an uneasy start, especially if it makes a couple more realistic about what marriage is all about. If life is difficult and even tragic, marriage will also be. Unrealistic expectations is at the root of many marital problems. A marriage must be tough in that it takes life as it comes, a day at a time, and makes the *most* of it which is even better than making the *best* of it. Bob Schuller says it well with "Tough times never last, but tough people do." Right on! It is tough marriages that last.

Speaking from the husband's perspective, my recipe for a good marriage is simple, suggested by the title of H. Page Williams' book, *Do Yourself A Favor: Love Your Wife.* Even if one is thinking mainly of himself, he is wise to adopt the principle laid down by Jesus: *It* is *more blessed to give than to receive.* And it is certainly more blessed to give than to *take,* an attitude that is certain to hurt a marriage.

As the old hit song put it, the way to treat a woman is to love her, love her, love her. I would add *extravagantly.* To love your wife pays high dividends, to love her extravagantly makes you rich. Such love can be (must be!) cultivated. If a man does not love his wife extravagantly, let him start acting that way (All men know what this involves), and it will soon be for real. If you say that love must be in the heart, you are of course right, but it must start with the will. A man can *will* to love his wife. It is the malady of not wanting that devastates marriages. If one wants his wife to change so that he can love her more, it can be done in only one way: love her! In time she will respond. Do yourself a favor, love your wife, extravagantly. It will so dramatically change your life that you will think you've died and gone to heaven.

This means to *tell* her you love her again and again, over and over, every day, and to show it in lots of ways. Make over her. Pamper her. Spoil her. She will be healthier, happier, and more beautiful. You cannot give bountifully without receiving bountifully. The more you do for her the more you do for yourself. Treat her like a thoroughbred and she'll not be a nag!

This means *never* fault her for anything and *never* complain at anything she does. Keep talking about how much you love her, how beautiful she is, and emphasize the things you appreciate. After awhile she will have no faults and do no wrong, or your love will be so

generous that you will see only the good. The biggest lie ever told is that every couple needs an occasional fight, “to get it out of your system,” they will say. Hogwash! A maturing marriage need have no fussing at all.

Our son David called from Missouri today, remembering our anniversary. He is now a family counselor, and he told us that his associates do not believe him when he tells them that his parents never in all his life had an argument, not even one. I told him that he could tell them that I have a sure way of avoiding even the possibility of an argument: I do whatever my wife tells me!

Fussing leads to frustration and frustration to poor self-image, and this often leads to infidelity, a curse to any marriage. In this hedonistic age of ours 60% of the men and 40% of the women are unfaithful in marriage at one time or another. This is more than a lack of commitment and discipline, for infidelity is the ultimate in selfish pride. Only love-oriented marriages, a love that seeks to give rather than to take, will save our nation from the dissolution of the home.

When a man does himself a favor by loving his wife, he will help her around the house and with the children. He will listen to her, do things with her, simple things, and he will understand her greatest need, to be appreciated. And let’s add a touch of humor to all this. Ghandi, who went far in changing his part of the world, said if it had not been for a sense of humor he would have committed suicide. So with a marriage: without humor it commits suicide. Humor is of course joy and laughter, but it is more. It is an attitude toward life, an attitude of not taking ourselves too seriously.

Most of what I have said would apply to any marriage, and that is why unbelievers who practice unselfish love have longer and happier marriages than many Christians. It is an example of how God’s grace reaches out and blesses those who do not even honor him, for love and happiness are His gifts.

When the Christian graces are added to all this, when God is exalted in the home, then a couple moves from a good marriage to the abundant life that our Lord brought to this earth. When there is trust in time of trouble and hope in time of tragedy, and an assurance that all is well all of the time in spite of hardships, then there is a relationship that transcends the wisdom of this world.

Now that I've overflowed into the day *after* our 41st, I can tell you that Ouida is at the county courthouse sitting on a jury. She could have been excused because of her invalid mother, but I told her she should do her civic duty and that I would care for Mother Pitts today. She called at noon to tell me she had been selected and that she and five others would determine the fate of a DWI felon who had pleaded guilty, hopefully before the day is out. I envy her. I have always wanted to serve on a jury. The court has summoned me often, but I have never been selected. With the judge on the bench and with Ouida in the jury box, I am not sure I would want to be that DWI.

In the meantime I have made several trips across the street to help a neighbor, a man who lives alone, who is having asthmatic attacks. When I thought he might not be able to keep on breathing, I called the paramedics, who told him it was imperative that they take him to the hospital, but he steadfastly refused to go. Since one cannot be taken against his will, they told me to watch him and if he goes unconscious to call them, for according to law unconsciousness allows for "implied consent." So I go over and check on him. He lies there in pain, laboring to breath, but will not be helped, even when I offer to take him in my car —and he carries a hospitalization card from Bell Telephone. "Why do you do this to yourself?," I implore, "Why will you not get the help you need?" *I don't want to go!*, he keeps saying. Now that I have called his kin in Fort Worth maybe they can do something with him. Isn't man a strange critter!

It is 6:00 p.m. and Ouida is not home yet. Maybe she had them hang the poor guy out on the courthouse lawn. It has happened before, in the old days. I can hardly wait until she gets home. We'll have a lot to talk and laugh about. —*the Editor*

P.S. Ouida did not hang the defendant but she did hang the jury. The D.A. asked for a year in prison and a $1,000 fine, but Ouida was the only juror that agreed, the others wanting a lighter sentence. As she emphasized the seriousness of the crime, that he tried to run over the arresting officer and elude arrest, two or three at last agreed with her. She finally made a mild compromise in order to get a conviction: *Ten months, $1,000 fine.* After the verdict the jury was told things that because of a technicality could not be told during the trial: the defendant was a dope peddler, had done time in a Federal pen, and that was not his first DWI One juror, angry with Ouida for her austerity ("We must do our duty and send a message to our community about drunk drivers"), was then pleased that they had put the old boy away for awhile. I told her that she was a moral hero, like Patrick Henry, and that her courage in the jury room might well have saved someone's life by putting that potential murderer behind bars. "Today you might have saved the life of someone's grandchild," I told her.

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MISSING THE MAIN EVENT

I am from a large family of seven boys and one girl, and while we are no longer young six of us are still living. One story that I grew up hearing was the one about my older brothers slipping away from home and going to Weatherford (we were all born and grew up mostly in Mineral Wells, Texas) to see the big circus. Slipping inside the circus grounds, my brothers made the circle of sideshows where they saw one man swallow a knife and another swallow fire, and there was the usual fat lady and the man with two faces. Even though there was the three-ring Barnum and Bailey extravaganza under the big tent, my brothers came on home, supposing they had seen the circus. They went to the circus but missed the main event!

A trifle of an incident reminded me of that story as I was driving across our little city of Denton recently. On our busiest four-lane thoroughfare a woman turned into an intersection, which provides sufficient room for a car while waiting for the traffic from the opposite direction to clear. But she did not utilize all her space, so her car protruded into the lane she was leaving, causing the cars behind her to have to stop and wait for her to get out of the way. I was the second car in line, and I noticed that the man in front did not like what was going on. When the woman at last eased out of our way, he rolled down his window and made an indecent gesture at her as he passed.

I watched the man as he drove a little further and turned into an apartment complex. As I drove on I could see him in my mind's eye getting out of his car, making his way up to his apartment, and grinding out one more evening with his wife and children. I wondered what a man would think about and talk about, a man who makes insulting gestures to a distraught woman caught in a traffic storm. I found myself wanting to say to him, not in reprimand but in pleading love, "You probably think of yourself as a decent guy, but do you realize what you just did to another human being? It was as if you spat on that woman or urinated on her. Is that the kind of person you want to be?" I did say to myself aloud, *Poor guy, what a way to live!* And he of course is the one to pity, more than the woman. And I thought of the circus story. How many there are who go through life, indulging in the shallow and the superficial, while missing the main event. And one who has not learned to treat his fellows with common decency has missed the point of life.

When I told Ouida about it, she reminded me that many people seem to be "depersonalized" when in an automobile and thus behave in subhuman ways, displaying discourtesies that they would not dare manifest at the shop or office. A car both insulates and isolates the person, as if he were hidden behind a mask, thus allowing his baser instincts free reign. To put it another way, the close proximity of most of our social intercourse is such that we are forced, by self-interest if no other motive, to behave civilly. But when stripped of our identity, as in a car or in the writing of an unsigned letter, the moral parameters are not there, and we all sometimes find ourselves doing and saying things that astonish even ourselves.

Which is the real we, the "on guard" person at the office or the one lost in anonymity in an automobile? Ouida and I agreed that the man who insulted the woman behind his mask was the real man, even though he would have treated her respectfully under other circumstances.

I had other thoughts. This obscene incident took place between two state universities, Texas Woman's and North Texas State. We are an "educated" city, with more PhDs than any other city of its size in the nation. Still we must say that this man's act was as ignorant as it was vicious. It was a moronic way to deal with a problem. A man who is not a gentleman is not an educated man, however many facts he may have crammed into his cranium.

More than all else, however, we see in such an ugly act, which would be in the same class as calling a black man nigger, the true character of sin. Sin is waywardness, a betrayal of one's selfhood, and rebellion against what one knows to be right, good, and decent. And sin is always destructive. One such trifle as an indecent gesture not only serves to erode the finer instincts of those involved but is degrading to all of society. What I saw from the car behind, and what we all see everyday, reminds us how far we are from "peace on earth and goodwill toward men." If such behavior was disgusting to me, then how much more repulsive such things are to the Holy One of heaven. Still He loves us; still He gave us the Christ. That God still hasn't given up on sinful man — sinful in so many "little" ways — underscores His abundant mercy and longsuffering.

As for being in on life's main event, it has to do with living fully and freely, not only for ourselves but for others as well. It means being a quality person, not so much in terms of fame or fortune, but in reference to courtesy, meekness, charity, sincerity, responsibility.

While I was writing this piece, my son David told us of a dinner conversation with a friend who is trying to find his way. “I don’t know why I am in this world,” he admitted, asking David for his answer. I like David’s answer, “We are here to praise God,” even though it may need some filling in. I told him how the Westminster divines answered the question centuries ago: “Man’s duty is to know God and to enjoy him forever.” We praise God by knowing Him and exploring His universe, which includes ourselves —“Know thyself” as the ancient Greeks put it. And we praise God by serving others, by being a blessing to the world He loves. If we miss this, we miss the main event. —*the Editor*

What Is Really Important?

I may, I suppose, regard myself or pass for being a relatively successful man. People occasionally stare at me in the streets —that’s fame. I can fairly easily earn enough to qualify for admission to the higher slopes of the Internal Revenue —that’s success. Furnished with money and a little fame even the elderly, if they care to, may partake of trendy diversions —that’s pleasure. It might happen once in a while that something I saw or wrote was sufficiently heeded for me to persuade myself that it represented a serious impact on our time —that’s fulfillment.

Yet I say to you —and I beg you to believe me —multiply these tiny triumphs by a million, add them all together, and they are nothing —less than nothing, a positive impediment —measured against one draught of that living water Christ offers to the spiritually thirsty, irrespective of who or what they are. —*Malcolm Muggeridge*

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WE MUST CHANGE THE WAY WE THINK

We must of course think rationally, logically, and responsibly, and I have written along those lines in recent years, emphasizing that *the mind matters*, but I have something else in mind in this piece. I am now saying that we must think differently about the way we see ourselves in reference to the world at large. One who has grown up in Churches of Christ

and at last discovers “the world out there” may conclude that as a people we have given little critical thought to social ethics, global problems, or international issues. Our thinking has been far too provincial and parochial.

That perhaps is the essence of what I wish to say: *we must cultivate the catholic mind rather than the parochial one.* We must learn to think universally rather than provincially. One more big word might prove helpful, if I explain myself: we must learn to think magnanimously. To think provincially is to think as if we have never been out of Texas or Tennessee; to think parochially is to think with what some call “the Church of Christ mind,” which is to think too much in terms of well defined parameters where white is white and black is black with no in between variations. To think magnanimously is to be large-souled, to be more concerned with doing good than in “being right.” To be magnanimous is to be eminently Christian: forgiving, forbearing, gracious, compassionate. It was one of Aristotle’s great ideas. To him the magnanimous person was one who was excellent in heart as well as in mind.

We must become catholic and magnanimous in our view of the church in the world. I read a column in *Theology Today,* an eminent Protestant quarterly, with the title “The Church in the World,” which serves to give the reader some insight into behind-the-scenes events of the church universal. Such information is mind-expanding. Glancing back over old issues one can read of how 129 years of missionary activity by the U. S. Presbyterians found fruition in union with the Church of Christ in Thailand with its 20,000 members in a land where only 1% are Christians (1957), a report on how the Roman Catholic Church is losing its hold in Latin America, even having to import personnel from other countries (1966), and a report on the growth of Christianity in Africa, from 4 million in 1900 to 97 million in 1970, with a projection of 251 million by 2000, making it the most Christian continent in the world (1971). In 1984 I myself wrote one of the columns, telling the rest of the Christian world of the origin and significance of the Stone-Campbell Movement.

As we think from a broader perspective we will come to see how all professed Christians, of whatever name, are but a small minority in this troubled world and badly need each other. While 1.3 billion “Christians” may appear large, it is no more than 25% of the five billion that occupy this globe. Even more significant for our mindset is that the majority of Christians no longer live in what we call “the Western world.” Christianity’s center of gravity has shifted to the so-called “Third World,” with more than half of all Christians living in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Pacific islands.

This means that in this century over half the Christians live in nations whose heritage is not Christian but pagan and heathen. While it is hard to believe, the old classical Christian tradition, with its reformers and cathedrals and its Graeco-Roman roots, is now a minority tradition. This means that most of our sisters and brothers in the world see the world's problems from an entirely different perspective from our own, and so we all are going to have to think more globally.

This should make us sympathetic with all ecumenical movements and with the World Council of Churches in particular, even when we have misgivings. There are now over 300 denominations from more than 100 nations in the WCC, representing some 400 million believers, and many of these are from the Third World, referred to in ecumenical circles as "the young churches." One can appreciate the bewilderment these churches faced when the Metropolitan Community Church, a denomination for homosexuals, applied for membership in the WCC. Even though supportive of the radical diversity of the church around the world, the WCC could not go so far as to accept an avowed homosexual church, a decision determined in part no doubt by the threat of a walk-out by many of the Third World churches.

We must come to think in terms of "a geography of needs," which is to view the world in terms of peace and justice. In this context peace can be defined as the commonweal of all mankind or the wholeness of mankind in general, which means freedom from want as well as freedom from war. Justice on the other hand would be the way individuals and communities within larger society feel toward each other and treat each other. Racism, for example, is injustice even if the general conditions are peaceful. So all of us Christians in the world, many of whom suffer the injustice of poverty, must work for both peace and justice in the world. It is to the shame of considerable modern missionary efforts, including "Restoration" churches, that they have given little serious thought to global peace and justice.

It was the WCC, for example, and not the fundamentalist-evangelical denominations (and not ourselves!) that passed this resolution in Vancouver a year or so ago: *We believe that the time has come when the churches must unequivocally declare that the production and deployment as well as the use of nuclear weapons are crimes against humanity and that such activities must be condemned on ethical and theological grounds.* The Roman Catholics did however issue a similar resolution.

It has been easy for us to reject the WCC out of hand, but who is more sensitive to the spirit of Christ in a world at the brink of disaster, the WCC or ourselves, when it goes on to proclaim to the world: “Nuclear deterrence, as the strategic doctrine which has justified nuclear weapons in the name of security and war prevention, must now be categorically rejected as contrary to our faith in Jesus Christ who is our life and peace. Nuclear deterrence is morally unacceptable because it relies on the credibility of the *intention to use* nuclear weapons. We believe that any intention to use weapons of mass destruction is an utterly inhuman violation of the mind and spirit of Christ which should be in us.”

Christians will differ on how is the best way to achieve peace, and they will differ on the above statement. But at least the WCC is attempting to bring the massive build-up of nuclear weapons, which now number 40,000 on both sides (In 1947 Truman said *six* nuclear bombs should be enough to deter the Soviets!) to the judgment bar of Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all the earth.

The world in general may be ahead of the church in regard to the moral hazzards of nuclear build-up. A university study reveals that fully 92% of Americans believe that a bigger U. S. nuclear arsenal will only cause the Russians to increase their arsenal, and so the proliferation will continue. If much of the world is eventually destroyed in a nuclear holocaust, the survivors may ask in the aftermath *What was the witness of the church?* If the church around the world cried out as one man *Stop this madness!,* and if we prayed with like passion, it might go far in bringing world leaders to the negotiating table. Disarmament is possible and Christians are the ones that can make it happen.

We are really talking about freedom, which is the only way to peace and justice, and freedom begins in our thinking. We think freedom and then we do freedom. And this is our great need among Christian ChurchesChurches of Christ, to *think* freely. Only then will we seriously and critically think about our nation and our world. No one can give us freedom, not even on such documents as the Magna Charta, and we cannot give freedom to others, whether in Vietnam or in Central America.

Freedom has to be claimed by those who would be free. As we see in Poland where freedom is being claimed. And that is another illustration of what I am saying. Poland! Think Poland! And pray fervently for such a world, the kind of world our Lord died for. Many, many of the Poles are our sisters and brothers, too. —*the Editor*

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WHAT GOD REQUIRES

Cecil Hook

There is endless Bible study and discussion in a sincere effort to learn what God requires of us. Often, good people are greatly discouraged by the complicated burden which they think that God has laid on them. God's demands seem so involved and vague that the shadow of doubt and insecurity hovers over these devout disciples because they feel that they might not be understanding what God requires of them. They feel entrapped by the intricate will of their Father.

Because I was born of, and nurtured on, legalism, I shared those feelings for many years. Now, I am beginning to understand that it is we, not the Lord, who have made the requirements complicated. As the Pharisees complicated the Law of Moses and missed its purposes, so we have sought to define details through which we think to attain our righteousness, and we have made these holy details the center of our religion. With such a background, it has been difficult for me to comprehend that "my yoke is easy and my burden is light," that "his commandments are not grievous/burdensome," and that God can make us to stand in spite of our lack of conformity.

God's timeless law is not a complicated system. From Cain and Abel on down to us, God's law has always been; love/respect God, and love/respect man. In various ages and circumstances God has given statutes, laws, ordinances, and regulations to guide the lawless into the practice of this universal law. These stipulations were given because man disregarded the principle of law written in the heart; thus, ". . . the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners. . ." (1 Tim. 1:8). But man everywhere has always had the timeless law in his conscience to guide him.

Murder, theft, greed, adultery, and idolatry are not wrong because they are parts of the Ten Commandments or of Jesus' list of prohibitions. They have always been, and always will be, wrong. They are included in the Ten Commandments and in Jesus' teachings because they were wrong already, being violations of the principle of God's timeless law of love for God and man.

When God has given ordinances, regulations, and rituals to guide the lawless, man's tendency has been to seek justification in keeping the jot and tittle of the requirement and ritual instead of being guided into expression of love. Such brought Jesus' denunciation of the Pharisees in Matthew 23. The woes pronounced on them should serve as warnings to us also.

Micah sought to put his people back on the uncomplicated course with this summary of God's universal requirements: "He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8). All other ordinances and regulations were but an elaboration of this epitome of all law.

Jesus' covenant was new, but his law was not. He repeated and emphasized God's requirement to love God and man. He concluded by adding, "On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets" (Matt. 22:40). They were the embodiment of all of God's message to man!

Jesus also summarized all moral law in the Golden Rule, "for this is the law and the prophets" (Matt. 7:12). Paul assures us that all law is summed up and fulfilled in one word —love (Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:14).

The will of God is for love to rule our conduct. Jesus warned, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21). Then he declared that such things as instructing in religion, sensational religious activities, and mighty Christian works are not necessarily the doing of his will.

Cain knew he had sinned because he knew the embodiment of all law relating to God and man. Micah and Jesus, in later ages, gave us similar nut-shell abridgements of all law.

Are these abridgements dangerous because they leave out rituals? We will not suspect the Holy Spirit of being mistaken or indiscreet. There is no sacramental value in rituals. The value imparted to the disciple from rituals and services is the strength he gains from learning and the spiritual exercise. He is not justified by them, nor are they measures of his righteousness. They are of value as they encourage the disciple to fulfill the timeless law of love. They are not what God requires of us, but they are a means to an end, to help us do his eternal will to love.

Think of all the hair-splitting requirements we have defined concerning the Lord's Supper, for instance, lest we miss its sacramental value or displease a demanding God. In the process, we have alienated people, preventing their communing together. Such misses God's requirement completely!

What does God require? We have often used the thrilling story of the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch to illustrate the simplicity of the process of becoming a disciple. Now, let us use that story to illustrate the simplicity in meeting God's requirements as a disciple.

The conversion of the eunuch makes a beautiful story, but have you thought about the unwritten, final chapter of that story? We last see the new convert headed back toward Ethiopia rejoicing in his new faith. But there he will be alone in his faith in Jesus. There is no church to meet with at home for the gospel is not yet preached among the Gentiles. So, he will have to "forsake the assembly" before he assembles the first time! He cannot go to worship because there is no worship service of the church. He cannot be taught and edified because there is no gospel preacher in his whole country.

Philip had only preached/evangelized to him Jesus. He did not instruct him in the Apostles' doctrine/teachings. There is a significant difference in preaching and teaching/instructing. A course of instruction was no prerequisite of conversion, and there is no example of that sort of indoctrination being given in the process of converting anyone. So, here is a lonely disciple who doesn't even know the "five acts of worship," the nature and work of the church, and all the rules and regulations relating to being a Christian. In fact, he doesn't even know about being a Christian because no one had ever used that designation at that time. This poor treasurer doesn't have a copy of the New Testament Scriptures, either, because none was in existence. He does have a copy of Isaiah and, hopefully, some of the other Old Testament Scriptures. He has the teachings of the law and the prophets written in his heart which have sustained his faith as a practicing Jew in Ethiopia.

It would seem that the Holy Spirit used poor judgment in calling Philip from a busy, successful campaign in Samaria, down to the Gaza highway just to make one green convert and then let him go immediately to the spiritual wasteland of Ethiopia to wither and die. What a waste of effort! The Spirit caught Philip up when they emerged from the water, and there was no more communication. The eunuch was left on the bank wet. How unmerciful it was that such a receptive, happy man would be allowed to ride off into disappointment and eternal loss.

Surely, it is I who is in judgmental error rather than the Spirit. The Spirit knew what he was doing, and he was not laboring under all of my accumulated misunderstandings and misinterpretations.

What will God require of that noble saint in his remote land? He will want him to continue to believe in Jesus and to grow in that faith. His Old Testament Scriptures will serve that need, even as they served other disciples then and now. His copy of Isaiah will have new and reassuring meanings to him now each time he reads it. He will see a picture of his Savior now as he meditates on the rituals of the law. But what about attendance to worship services? Participation in assemblies is not a requirement for justification, but it is intended to be for edification. All should involve themselves in strength building activities. But assemblies are not the only means for keeping faith strong. Many saints maintain strong faith who have been unable to attend services for years. The eunuch had kept his faith in God strong enough, without such "acts of worship" in assemblies, to cause him to return to Jerusalem for Jewish worship. He had gained his strength from the available Scriptures. Can they not still serve that saint's purpose well?

How will this displaced brother know what to do in serving God? He can recall that his Scriptures tell him to continue loving. That's what Jesus would stress. Nothing new there. Being a devout Jew, he will surely remember Micah's summary of requirements. Jesus would have him to follow the Golden Rule, "for this is the law and the prophets." James would tell him, "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit the orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world." (James 1:27). Jesus and James were restating God's universal will which the law and the prophets sought to promote. God still wants the' same response from man. Being free in Christ, let us, like the eunuch, go on our way rejoicing. *—1350 Huisache, New Braunfels, TX 78130.*

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OUR CHANGING WORLD

Good news from Alexander Campbell's hometown is that the Old Bethany Meeting House is being restored, with the outside work completed. Built in 1827, it was the continuation of the old Brush Run Church, the oldest Campbell church, organized in 1811. The building being renovated housed the Bethany church for almost a century before the present Bethany Memorial Christian Church was erected. The old church was where both of the Campbells preached and where their funerals were conducted. In 1966 we opened up the old church for a unity meeting, but ten years later at another such gathering it had been condemned and could not be used. Once completely renovated it can once again be used for special occasions, especially for events that celebrate Bethany's honored past.

When I visit the old church I can see Alexander Campbell serving Communion as he often did, telling the people, “One reason I want to go to heaven is that you will be there.”

New Church of Christ Paper

Of special interest to our readers is the announcement that a new bi-monthly journal, published by leaders in the Church of Christ, will be launched in June. *Image* will be edited by Reuel Lemmons, former editor of the *Firm Foundation*, with 24 staff writers from some 18 states, mostly ministers and college professors. The aim of the paper is “To contribute to the maturing of people into the image of the Son,” thus the name Image. Another goal is “To encourage the disciples of Jesus Christ to practice the unity for which Christ prayed.”

This concern for unity will be especially appealing to our readers, though they may wonder how serious this desire is when all 73 of the appointed writers are from “mainline” Churches of Christ, with no “conservatives” or “liberals” or “antis” or premills or non-class represented, and certainly none from Christian Churches, in spite of recent overtures with these brethren. By contrast, when those among Christian Churches recently started a “unity” paper called *One Body* they liberally made use of Church of Christ writers.

But still we welcome this new venture. While the brochure does not state the sub rate, you could probably receive a sample copy or sub information by writing to Image, 115 Warren Dr., Suite D, West Monroe, LA. 71291. Editor Lemmons can be excused for saying, in spite of obvious facts to the contrary, that the new journal will be “undenominational.” Like politicians who keep mouthing the same old bromides, our editors think they have to perpetuate the shallow myth that the Church of Christ is not a denomination. The *Baptist Standard* and the *Presbyterian Life* are “denominational” journals but not those published by Churches of Christ! While fewer and fewer really believe that anymore, our leaders keep saying it. —*the Editor*

The Arcadia Church of Christ in Arcadia, CA is making plans to cooperate with the Billy Graham Crusade in their area in July. The church has also shown the Tony Campolo film series on “I have decided to live like a believer.”

The volume number on recent issues has been wrong. This is Vol. 27, not Vol. 26. The dateline has been corrected. We also regret late mailings of late, which we hope soon to correct.

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BOOK NOTES

You have read enough of Cecil Hook in this journal to know that he is an able and resourceful writer, so you will want a copy of his *Free In Christ,* an attractive volume that is being distributed free of charge. Order from him at 1350 Huisache, New Braunfels, TX. 78130 and I suggest sending a dollar or two for postage. You can even request an extra copy for a friend. This lively volume is being widely read with appreciation.

We can make you a special deal on the four-volume set of Vincent's *Word Studies of the New Testament,* which is one of the more responsible in-depth linguistic studies. It takes the books of the NT in order, verse by verse and gives the meaning from the Greek of the key words and phrases. While the Greek words and phrases are given so are their English equivalents. It is a gold mine of information. The retail price is 49.95 but we have it for 39.95 postpaid.

I have an autographed copy of Dale Moody's *The Word of Truth,* which is a remarkable study of most biblical themes, which makes it a systematic theology. You will delight in his treatment of sin, salvation, the church, apostasy (He takes the Campbellite position!), the millennium, etc. Once you study, as I have done, and not just read this book you will benefit greatly from Moody's 40 years as professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and you will see why he has been a burr under the Baptist theological saddle, just as he would be if he were among us. 24.95 postpaid is not high considering the size of the volume.

Another of my favorites that I never finish is F. F. Bruce's *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free,* which will serve as a small library within itself for New Testament studies. I recommend it enthusiastically as a book to read if you want to really learn something. 18.95 postpaid.

And if you want to know something about your own heritage in Churches of Christ-Christian Churches I recommend my own book, *The Stone-Campbell Movement: An Anecdotal History of Three Churches.* The price is 21.95 and we pay the postage, or you can get a bonus copy free when you send us eight subs to this journal, which may include your own renewal.

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RESTORATION REVIEW is published monthly, except July and August, at 1201 Windsor Drive, Denton, Texas. Second class postage paid at Denton, Texas. SUBSCRIPTION RATES: $5.00 a year, or two years for $8.00; in clubs of five or more (mailed by us to separate addresses) $3.00 per name per year. (USPS 044450). POSTMASTER: Send Address changes to RESTORATION REVIEW, *1201 Windsor Dr., Denton, Texas 76201